

After more than a year of operating the Gulf Coast Claims Facility with little oversight, Ken Feinberg will finally have to open up his books for an independent audit.

On December 21, 2011, the Justice Department announced the selection of an auditor to conduct a thorough review of the oil spill claims processing facility which is funded by BP and run by claims czar Ken Feinberg. The audit process will begin shortly and is expected to be completed in March, according to the Justice Department.

In a letter to the newly selected auditor, Associate U.S. Attorney General Thomas Perrelli summarized the experiences of many Gulf Coast residents and businesses who have dealt with the GCCF: "Among other things, we have heard concerns about improper handling of documents submitted by claimants, unnecessary delays in processing of interim claims, and inconsistent payments for similarly situated claimants. This independent review will help determine whether these concerns are valid and, if they are, how the process can be improved."

Tens of thousands of individuals and businesses from Alabama have submitted claims to Mr. Feinberg's GCCF since August 2010. The majority of these claims have come from Baldwin and Mobile counties, which suffered the most economic damage from the catastrophic 2010 Gulf oil spill.

Throughout the process, Mr. Feinberg has maintained that his GCCF has handled claims fairly and efficiently. Yet, my office has heard from hundreds of people who have experienced frustration with Feinberg's claims processors who appear to be slow walking claims, applying different criteria to similar claims, and pushing claimants to accept quick, lower payouts than their higher original claim request.

In the months after Mr. Feinberg took over as claims administrator, then-Governor Bob Riley and I held multiple meetings with him over the GCCF's poor performance. Each time Mr. Feinberg promised improvements which never materialized. Over a year ago, I asked the Justice Department to exercise greater oversight over the GCCF to ensure claimants were being treated fairly. While he made small adjustments, Mr. Feinberg's performance record remains largely unchanged.

When Attorney General Eric Holder visited Baldwin County last June I asked him to conduct an audit of the GCCF. Several weeks later I was successful in submitting language for inclusion in the 2012 Commerce Justice Science appropriations bill calling for an independent audit of the GCCF. My language was adopted in legislation funding the Justice Department that was approved by Congress in November and passed into law.

To be sure, Alabamians are not the only ones who have experienced difficulty with the GCCF. Attorneys General in other Gulf states have voiced concern over the lack of transparency in Mr. Feinberg's claims system. A Louisiana federal judge even questioned Mr. Feinberg's independence of BP, which not only provides the funds for the claims payments but also covers Mr. Feinberg's salary as the GCCF administrator.

Gulf Coast residents and businesses which suffered economic injury from the unprecedented BP oil spill believed GCCF administrator Ken Feinberg when he assured us that legitimate claims would be paid. A year and a half after the oil spill, the people deserve no less than a full accounting of the GCCF's claims process. Let's open the books.

### **Now Accepting Applications for Congressional Internships:**

With the New Year comes the opportunity for interested South Alabama college students to apply for a summer internship in my congressional office. While summer is more than five months away, the applications process begins immediately and concludes in mid February.

If you are from Baldwin, Clarke, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe or Washington counties and have completed at least one semester of college, you are eligible to apply for a congressional internship.

As a congressional intern your duties will vary widely from assisting staff in opening and processing mail and taking phone calls, to researching and responding to legislative inquiries, to attending committee hearings.

You will also have the opportunity to tour one of the most fascinating cities in the world –

Washington, DC. The hands-on experience you will receive as a congressional intern should prove valuable whatever your career path.

The deadline to submit your application for a summer 2012 congressional internship is February 17. You can contact my office to request an application or visit my web site ([bonner.house.gov](http://bonner.house.gov)) and click "Internship Program" under "Students" in the menu bar to download a copy.

Space is limited, so if you are interested please contact my office as soon as possible.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

For release: January 2, 2012